

ADOT unveils plans for I-17

by Brian DiTullio



Brian A. Barbour photo

Construction is underway to widen the overpass at Carefree Highway and Interstate 17.

NORTH VALLEY – A lively group met last week with Arizona Department of Transportation representatives as they publicly unveiled future expansion plans for Interstate 17.

The ADOT open house was held Aug. 29 at Boulder Creek High School in Anthem.

Phase 1 of the current project began in May with construction on new overpasses at the alignments of Jomax Road and Dixileta Drive and an expanded interchange at Carefree Highway.

Future phases include two widening projects to add a third general-purpose lane and an HOV lane in each direction from Loop 101 to Carefree Highway. Another project scheduled for 2009 will widen I-17 up to Anthem Way. In addition, new interchanges will be constructed at the Lone Mountain Road and Dove Valley Parkway alignments, and the existing interchange at Deer Valley Road will be rebuilt to improve traffic flow and accommodate the new lanes on I-17.

The widening and interchange projects are scheduled for completion at various points throughout 2009, with the widening from Carefree Highway to Anthem Way scheduled for completion in 2010.

ADOT designer Mike Chase said the department is upgrading “everything” about the roadway, in effect rebuilding it from the ground up. This is partly due to the way that portion of I-17 was originally constructed.

“The road was built at two different times as a rural highway,” Chase said, explaining that section of I-17 originally was built as a two-lane highway in the 1960s, with the additional two lanes constructed later. “As far as I can tell, the southbound lanes were the original road.”

With this project, both sides of the interstate will get improvements to bring it up to current ADOT standards. “Now we’re turning this into an urban freeway,” Chase said.

Rep. Sam Crump (R-District 6) said he is pleased with the project so far, noting the minimal disruption to normal traffic flow. Crump also was glad to hear one of his hopes for the project will become a reality—that being all new overpasses, upon completion, will be connected to I-17

to serve as turnarounds to relieve traffic flow in the event of a major accident, even though by 2009 there may not be an east-west roadway connected to the interchange.

ADOT Senior Engineer Madhur Reddy confirmed the overpasses would be accessible to traffic, and noted that he was told by the City of Phoenix that Jomax Road would be connected to North Valley Parkway to serve as an additional option for drivers.

Don Herp with the city's Street Transportation Department verified the Jomax connection, telling The Desert Advocate the project would be going out to bid soon, with completion scheduled for early next year. Herp said a connection between the Dove Valley interchange and North Valley Parkway also is on the books, but no timetable has been confirmed.

As for frontage roads, Reddy said those would be put in by developers through municipal development agreements as the area fills in.

Jim Maksym, from New River, related that he was very pleased with the public presentation ADOT put on Aug. 29. "The openness they're providing has been really good," he said. "I contacted ADOT about this, and they called me right back and give me updates on e-mail."

Jim Fidler, also of New River, said he was on a committee that brought the community's concerns and wants to ADOT's attention several years ago. "I'm glad to see it's going so good. It's nice to see it going so soon."